

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KHARTO 03234 181433Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08
INR-10 LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
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R 181212Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7873
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L KHARTOUM 3234

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: ELAB PINS PINT SU
SUBJECT: RAILROAD UNION PREAPARES FOR NEW ELECTIONS

1. RAILROAD WORKERS UNION WILL HOLD ELECTIONS JULY 27 TO
SELECT OFFICERS AND NATIONAL COMMITTEE. PRESENT LEADERSHIP
HAS RESIGNED DESPITE RECENT SUPREME COURT DECISION WHICH
NULLIFIED THEIR EARLIER RESIGNATIONS. NEW ELECTIONS MAY
BRING STABILITY TO RAILROAD UNION AFTER PROLONGED PERIOD OF
TURMOIL AND INTERNAL RIVALRY.

2. FORMER UNION PRESIDENT MOHAMED HASSAN ABDALLAH LOST
SUPPORT AMONG RANK AND FILE BECUASE OF ACCUSATIONS OF
CORRUPTION, FAVORITISM TOWARDS TRAFFIC DIVISION AND
SWEETHEART RELATIONS WITH RAILROAD. OTHER FOUR DIVISIONS
IN RAILROAD ARE ENGINEERING, CATERING , WORKSHOPS AND
STORES. ABBAS KHIDER OF STORES ORGANIZED OPPOSITION WHICH
SOUGHT ABDALLAH'S OUSTER. ACCORDING TO REPORTS FROM
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PAGE 02 KHARTO 03234 181433Z

ATBARA, THERE WERE SEVERAL ACTS OF VIOLENCE DIRECTED
AGAINST ABDALLAH AND HIS REPUTED SIX HOUSES IN EARLY
APRIL WHEN LABOR DISCONTENT WAS RIFE.

3. LABOR COMMISSIONER IN MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SERVICES
AND ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM ORDERED ABDALLAH TO RESIGN IN
APRIL BECAUSE OF INCREASING DISCONTENT WITH HIS LEADER-

SHIP. NEW ELECTIONS WERE CALLED ALTHOUGH ABDALLAH'S TERM WOULD NOT EXPIRE UNTIL 1980. ABDALLAH WENT TO COURT, LOST LOWER COURT DECISION DURING JUNE AND THEN RESIGNED. RECENT SUPREME COURT DECISION WHICH REVERSED LOWER COURT IN HIS FAVOR CAUSED HIM AND HIS COLLEAGUES TO RENEGE ON RESIGNATIONS. THIS IN TURN INSPIRED RAILROAD WORKERS TO STOP WORK JUNE 22 IN PROTEST. ACCORDING TO REPORTS, NIMEIRI THEN TOLD ABDALLAH THAT, REGARDLESS OF HIS VICTORY IN COURT, HE HAD TO RESIGN TO PERMIT NEW ELECTIONS. NIMEIRI REASONED THAT EFFECTIVE TWO-DAY WORK STOPPAGE DEMONSTRATED THAT ABDALLAH HAD SO FEW SUPPORTERS AMONG UNION MEMBERSHIP THAT THEY COULD NOT OPERATE ANY TRAINS AT ALL.

4. DURING INTERNAL DISPUTE ABBAS KHIDER GOT CREDIT FOR PERSUADING RAILROAD UNION TO VOLUNTEER TO WORK SEVEN DAY WEEK IN SUPPORT OF SUDANGOV'S COMMITMENT TO OAU CONFERENCE. UNION ALSO MADE SEVERAL PUBLIC STATEMENTS IN SUPPORT OF NIMEIRI'S POLICIES, THANKS TO ABBAS KHIDER, WHO IS MUSLIM BROTHER AND IMAM OF ATBARA MOSQUE. ABBAS KHIDER HAS STATED THAT HE IS NOT PLANNING TO SEEK NATIONAL OFFICE IN UNION. MOHAMMED HASSAN ABDALLAH WILL NOT RUN FOR RE-ELECTION AS PRESIDENT. ONLY WELL-KNOWN THIRD FORCE, MUSA MITAY, FORMER UMMA PARTY ADHERENT AND FOLLOWER OF SADIQ AL-MAHDI, HAS ALSO DISAVOWED INTENDTIONS OF UNION LEADERSHIP. OUTCOME OF ELECTIONS IS UNCERTAIN.

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PAGE 03 KHARTO 03234 181433Z

5. COMMENT: RAILROAD UNION HAS TRADITION OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY. PRIOR TO THE ULTIMATELY ABORTIVE COMMUNIST COUP IN 1971N THE UNION WAS A BASTION OF THE SUDANESE COMMUNIST PARTY. COMMUNIST LEADERSHIP OF UNION WAS ELIMINATED IN AFTERMATH OF COUP AND WAS REPLACED BY MOSLEM BROTHERS. ABOUT A YEAR LATER, THE BROTHERHOOD TRIED ITS OWN UNSUCCESSFUL COUP-PRECIPITATING INTER ALIA THE OUSTER OF THE BROTHERS FROM UNION POSITIONS THROUGHOUT SUDAN. NIMEIRI'S POLICY OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION HAS BROUGHT THE MOSLEM BROTHERS NEW RESPECTABILITY AND A RETURN TO UNION POLITICS. THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT ALL RAILROAD WORKERS-COMMUNISTS, MOSLEM BROTHERS OR THOSE OF A LESS EXTREMIST STRIPE CONSIDERED ABDALLAH A GOVERNMENT STOOGE. SUDAN WORKERS TRADE UNION FEDERATION HAD SUPPORTED ABDALLAH FEARFUL OF OTHER CHALLENGES TO THEIR LEADERSHIP IN CONSTITUENT UNIONS AS A RESULT OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION POLICIES AND GREATER FREEDOM OF ALL PARTIES TO SPEAK OUT IN CURRENT POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE.

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